

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /074 W

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R 161948Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5073

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 27149

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS: AMBASSADOR'S

CALL ON OLIVIER GUICHARD, MINISTER OF
JUSTICE

REFS: (A) PARIS 26801; (B) PARIS 26960

1. SUMMARY: AS PART OF MY ROUND OF CALLS ON NEW
CABINET MEMBERS, I VISITED MINISTER OF JUSTICE OLIVIER
GUICHARD ON SEPTEMBER 15. GUICHARD IS A VETERAN
GAULLIST BARON WHO HAS REPLACED FORMER PRIME MINISTER
JACQUES CHIRAC AS THE POLITICAL COORDINATOR OF ALL
THE PARTIES IN GISCARD'S MAJORITY COALITION. I FIND
HIS PERSONALITY AND PHILOSOPHY WELL SUITED TO HIS
PRINCIPAL ROLE OF KEEPING THE MAJORITY PARTIES FROM
SPLITTING APART BETWEEN NOW AND 1978. END SUMMARY.

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2. I ASKED GUICHARD IF HE FELT THE MAJORITY COALITION CAN REMAIN UNIFIED DESPITE THE SHOCK WAVES CAUSED BY CHIRAC'S RESIGNATION. GUICHARD REPLIED THAT HE HAS CERTAIN ATTRIBUTES WHICH CHIRAC DID NOT HAVE AND WHICH COULD SERVE THE MAJORITY COALITION WELL AT THIS TIME. HE LISTED THREE OF THESE CHARACTERISTICS. FIRST, GUICHARD SAID HE IS NOT DRIVEN BY POLITICAL AMBITION. CHIRAC WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT, AN ELEMENT THAT CANNOT FAIL TO CAUSE TENSION. SECONDLY, GUICHARD HAS BEEN INTIMATELY INVOLVED WITH THE GAULLISTS SINCE 1947. HE KNOWS EVERYBODY AND HAS ACCESS TO EVERYBODY. FINALLY, GUICHARD SAID HE HAS A PASSIVE PERSONALITY WHICH TENDS TO GENERATE CALM AND SERENITY. GUICHARD SAID HIS MAIN TASK BETWEEN NOW AND THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IS TO BRING CALM AND SERENITY BACK TO THE MAJORITY COALITION. "THE FRENCH PEOPLE LIKE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN POLITICAL DISPUTES", GUICHARD SAID, "BUT THEY BECOME VERY UNHAPPY IF THE POLITICIANS GOVERNING THE COUNTRY ARE CONSTANTLY FIGHTING EACH OTHER. THE ELECTORATE TENDS TO VOTE AGAINST SUCH GOVERNMENTS".

3. AS FAR AS THE OVERALL POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED, GUICHARD SAID HE WOULD BE ADVISING PRIME MINISTER BARRE ON THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF HIS ECONOMIC MEASURES TO FIGHT INFLATION. "LET'S FACE IT", GUICHARD SAID, "THE INFLATION PROBLEM WILL NEVER REALLY BE SOLVED. BUT IF WE CAN AMELIORATE IT SOMEWHAT BETWEEN NOW AND 1978, WE MAY BE ABLE TO WIN THE ELECTION. TAKING SOME UNPOPULAR MEASURES NOW IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SOME POPULAR RESULTS LATER MIGHT JUST WORK IN OUR FAVOR".

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 27149

4. A FEW HOURS AFTER OUR CONVERSATION, GUICHARD WAS INTERVIEWED ON FRENCH TELEVISION WHERE HE LIVED UP TO WHAT HE TOLD ME. HE WAS ASKED TO COMMENT ON CHIRAC'S STATEMENTS REPORTED REFTELS. A NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS HAD CHARACTERIZED CHIRAC'S REMARKS AS THE OPENING GUN IN AN EFFORT TO UNDERMINE GISCARD'S LEADERSHIP, SPLIT THE MAJORITY COALITION, AND FORCE EARLY ELECTIONS. GUICHARD DISMISSED ALL THESE INTERPRETATIONS AS GROUND-LESS. HE SAID IT IS PERFECTLY NATURAL FOR AN EX-PRIME MINISTER TO KEEP HIS NAME IN THE LIMELIGHT. AND IF CHIRAC WANTS TO WORK HARD TO DEFEAT THE SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST COALITION ON THE LEFT, THAT'S ALL TO THE GOOD. IN OTHER WORDS, IF GUICHARD HAS HIS WAY, THERE WILL NOT BE A FIGHT WITH CHIRAC.
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5. COMMENT: I WAS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED WITH GUICHARD, ESPECIALLY HIS PRAGMATIC VIEW OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE IN FRENCH POLITICS. I THINK GISCARD MADE A WISE CHOICE IN SELECTING HIM DE FACTO POLITICAL COORDINATOR OF THE MAJORITY COALITION.
RUSH

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